

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9561

INFO AMCONSUL CALI

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 7889

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:

SUBJ: ARMY REPORTEDLY DEALS ANTIOQUIA GUERRILLAS HEAVY BLOW

1. THE FOURTH BRIGADE OF THE COLOMBIAN ARMY, HAS, ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS DEALT A HEAVY BLOW TO THE ARMY OF NATIONAL LIBERATION (ELN) GUERRILLAS OPERATING IN ANTIOQUIA DEPARTMENT. THE ACTION, WHICH TOOK PLACE IN MOUNTAINOUS COUNTRY SOME 95 MILES FROM MEDELLIN, REPORTEDLY RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF SEVEN GUERRILLAS AND THE CAPTURE OF TEN OTHERS. LISTED AMONG THE SLAIN WAS ANTONIO VASQUEZ CASTANO, BROTHER OF ELN LEADER FABIO VASQUEZ. AMONG THOSE LISTED AS CAPTURED WAS THE GUERRILLA PRIEST LUIS HERRERA ZABALA, ONE YOUNG WOMAN AND A TEN YEAR OLD BOY. THE ARMY ALSO REPORTED CAPTURING SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES OF ARMS IN THE ANTIOQUIA OPERATIONS.

2. COLONEL ALVARO RIVEROS AVELLA, THE WELL REGARDED, AGGRESSIVE COMMANDER OF THE FOURTH BRIGADE DESCRIBED THE ACTION TO THE PRESS IN TERMS INDICATING THAT THE ANTIOQUIA ELN FORCES WERE NEARLY EXTINCT. HE SAID THAT THERE NOW REMAINED ONLY SOME TWENTY ELN GUERRILLAS IN THE ANTIOQUIA REGION, AND THAT THE ARMY EXPECTED TO MOP THEM UP IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

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3. THE DEATH OF ELN LEADER ANTONIO VASQUEZ FOLLOWED BY A FEW

DAYS THE OFFER, MADE IN FULL PAGE NEWSPAPER ADS BY THE ANTIOQUIA GOVERNMENT, OF A MILLION PESO REWARD FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO THE CAPTURE OF HIS BROTHER, FABIO. THERE HAS TO DATE BEEN NO INFORMATION TO INDICATE WHETHER OR NOT THAT OFFER WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN BRINGING ABOUT THE ARMY'S SUCCESSFUL ACTION.

4. COMMENT: THE REPORTED ROUTE OF THE ELN IN ANTIOQUIA WOULD, IF TRUE, ENHANCE THE ATMOSPHERE OF CIVIL ORDER IN WHICH THE GOC HOPES, NEXT APRIL, TO CONDUCT PARTISAN ELECTIONS FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TWENTY YEARS. IT WOULD ALSO BE A TANGIBLE ACHIEVEMENT FOR THE CONSERVATIVES TO POINT TO, AS PROOF OF THEIR ABILITY TO LEAD THE COUNTRY BACK TO NORMAL POLITICAL LIFE. IT SHOULD BE NOTED HOWEVER THAT THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED THE DEMISE OF ONE OF THE ELN'S NOTORIOUS VASQUEZ BROTHERS. THERE HAVE IN ADDITION BEEN REPORTS IN RECENT MONTHS OF GUERRILLA DEFEATS THAT ON CLOSER EXAMINATION PROVED MORE APPARENT THAN REAL. THE EMBASSY IS ACCORDINGLY CONFERRING WITH THE COLOMBIAN AUTHORITIES ON THE SCOPE AND NATURE OF THE REPORTED ROUTE OF THE ANTIOQUIA GUERRILLAS.

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